Communist Systems and the 'Iron Law of Pluralism'

STEPHEN WHITE*

It is now nearly twenty years since Daniel Bell despatched ten theories 'in search of Soviet reality'.[1] Each of these theories represented, 'despite some shading or overlap, . . . a coherent judgement of Soviet behavior'. Considering them side by side, Bell thought, would make it easier to identify their respective merits and shortcomings; and it should also make clear which had '"stood up" in explaining events', and which had not. Bell himself refrained from judgement on this point. In retrospect, however, it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that none of the theories that Bell identified – nor indeed any of those that have joined them in more recent years[2] – has yet come close to success. Rather, as the scholarly literature groans under the weight of a steadily-accumulating load of models and paradigms, each one more abstruse and more removed from reality than its predecessor, there must be many who would be inclined to agree with Alfred Hirschman that the continued search for conceptual innovation may well have become a positive 'hindrance to understanding'.[3]

This was not always the case. Until at least the latter part of the 1960s, it appeared possible that one of the theories that Bell identified, the totalitarian theory, might secure that kind of near-unanimous scholarly support that had thus far eluded its competitors. If such a consensus ever existed, however, it was certainly not in evidence a decade later. Rooted in an account of the Soviet system as it existed during the Stalin era, the totalitarian theory, it was now agreed, had been left far behind by changes in the nature of the reality it purported to describe. The most important of these changes was probably the diminished use of terror, hitherto regarded as the

* University of Glasgow. The present paper is based upon research which was carried out at the University of Leningrad in the course of an exchange visit in March and April 1975 under the auspices of the British Council. I have also profited from seminar discussions at Bradford, Glasgow and Cambridge, and from the detailed comments of Dr David Lane and Professor Anthony King.

[1] Daniel Bell, 'Ten Theories in Search of Soviet Reality', *World Politics*, X (1958), 327–65.

[2] For some representative recent surveys, see R. E. Kanet, ed., *The Behavioral Revolution and Communist Studies* (New York: Free Press, 1971); F. J. Fleron, ed., *Communist Studies and the Social Sciences* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969); T. H. Rigby, 'New Trends in the Study of Soviet Politics', *Politics*, V (1970), 1–17; A. H. Brown, *Soviet Politics and Political Science* (London: Macmillan, 1974); J. Collignon, 'De l'isolationnisme au comparatisme: méthodes et approches anglo-saxonnes pour l'analyse du système politique soviétique', *Revue Française de Science Politique*, XXVI (1976), 445–82; and B. McGrath and S. McInnes, 'Better Fewer but Better: On Approaches to the Study of Soviet and East European Politics', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, XVIII (1976), 327–37.

[3] A. Hirschman, 'The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding', *World Politics*, XXII (1970), 329–43.

theory's most crucial component; but changes in the size and mode of leadership of the ruling party were at least as difficult to reconcile with the original definition. A series of half-hearted revisions – 'totalitarianism without terror', 'partialitarianism', even 'totalitarianism with a human face' – attempted, without much success, to bring the theory up to date. Indeed the fact that it was not abandoned altogether may have had as much to do with its ideological attractions – equating, as it did, the Soviet system with the major fascist dictatorships – as with its strictly intellectual merits.[4]

For the student of comparative communist politics another kind of criticism was at least as important. For the totalitarian theory, whatever its other merits, had at least two major defects. In the first place, it was highly resistant to cross-system comparison within the group of communist (or 'totalitarian') states, despite the manifest and increasing diversity among them. Secondly, it was static, in that it failed to provide a satisfactory basis for the explanation of change over time in any political system thus categorized. 'The onset of a period of conspicuous large-scale change in Communist systems', Jeremy Azrael has written, 'made this deficiency seem particularly grave. Furthermore, the fact that change has proceeded in different directions in different Communist countries has suggested that the uniformity of the preceding period existed largely in the eye of the observer – an observer whose vision was clouded by a model that stressed formal institutions at the expense of dynamic nationally and culturally differentiated processes.'[5] Recent years have accordingly seen a number of attempts to relate communist systems more closely to their national backgrounds and changing socio-economic environments: to insert them, that is to say, into a comparative and developmental perspective.[6] It is with one such attempt – a series of propositions relating to political change in communist systems, which we have termed the 'iron law of pluralism' – that the present paper is concerned.

COMMUNIST SYSTEMS AND THE 'IRON LAW OF PLURALISM'

The pluralist thesis departs from the initial assumption that the communist states, variously conceptualized as 'modernizing' or 'mobilizing' regimes, will manifest the

[4] The standard account remains that of C. J. Friedrich and Z. K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965). For some 'revisionist' statements, see B. R. Barber, 'Conceptual Foundations of Totalitarianism', in C. J. Friedrich, ed., *Totalitarianism in Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1969); H. J. Spiro and B. R. Barber, 'Counter-ideological Uses of Totalitarianism', *Politics and Society*, 1 (1970), 3–22; and Stephen White, 'Political Science as Ideology: The Study of Soviet Politics', in B. Chapman and A. M. Potter, eds., *W.J.M.M. Political Questions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974).

[5] J. Azrael, 'Varieties of De-Stalinization', in Chalmers Johnson, ed., *Change in Communist Systems* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1970), pp. 135–6.

[6] Some representative studies are S. Huntington and C. H. Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1970); L. Schapiro, ed., *Political Opposition in One-party States* (London: Macmillan, 1972); Johnson, ed., *Change in Communist Systems*; Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Carl Beck, eds., *Comparative Socialist Systems: Essays on Politics and Economics* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Center for International Studies, 1975); and Mark Field, ed., *The Social Consequences of Modernization in Communist Societies* (Baltimore, Md., and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

same linkages between socio-economic change and the polity as other systems of this kind. Dahl has summed up these linkages as follows: a high socio-economic level and competitive politics are associated; not only competitive politics in general, but polyarchy in particular, are significantly associated with relatively high levels of socio-economic development; and the higher the socio-economic level, the more competitive the political system, and *vice versa*. 'Because of its inherent requirements', he writes, 'an advanced economy and its supporting social structures automatically distribute political resources and political skills to a vast variety of individuals, groups, and organizations'. Among these skills and advantages are knowledge, social esteem, the ability to organize, and access to organizations, experts and elites. These resources can in turn be used to negotiate for individual or group advantages, and to ensure that when conflicts arise, as they are bound to do, they will be resolved by negotiation and bargaining rather than by compulsion and coercion. Practices of this kind, Dahl writes, 'help to foster a political subculture with norms that legitimate negotiating, bargaining, logrolling, give and take, the gaining of consent as against unilateral power or coercion'.[7]

Dahl explicitly extends this analysis to the communist states. The monopoly over socio-economic sanctions at present enjoyed by the hegemonic rulers of these countries, he argues, is undermined by the success of their programmes of social and economic development. The more they succeed in transforming their economies (and with them, unavoidably, their societies), he writes, the more their political skills are threatened with obsolescence. If they seek to retain their political hegemony by force alone, they will be confronted by the enormous costs and inefficiencies of attempting to manage an advanced society by means appropriate to a society at a less complex stage of development. The change from Stalin's hegemony to the post-Stalinist system, Dahl argues, was a 'profound step towards liberalization'. Further changes of this kind are likely to occur as countries with hegemonic systems, such as Eastern Europe and the USSR, find a centrally-dominated social order increasingly difficult to maintain.[8]

A more developed analysis along similar lines is contained in Alexander Eckstein's recent paper on economic development and political change in communist systems.[9] In their early stages, Eckstein argues, communist systems – which he conceptualizes as 'mobilization regimes' – may be quite functional to a rapid rate of social and

[7] R. A. Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 64–5 and 77, and in F. I. Greenstein and N. W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science, Vol. 3: Macro-Political Theory* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), pp. 142–5. The literature on this general subject is too extensive for footnote citation. See, for a classic statement, Clark Kerr *et al.*, *Industrialism and Industrial Man* (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin Books, 1973); and for useful collections of papers, J. L. Finkle and R. W. Gable, eds., *Political Development and Social Change*, 2nd edn. (New York: Wiley, 1971); C. E. Welch, ed., *Political Modernization*, 2nd edn. (Belmont, N.C.: Wadsworth, 1971); J. V. Gillespie and B. A Nesvold, eds., *Micro-Quantitative Analysis* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971); and J. C. Pierce and R. A. Pride, eds., *Cross-National Macro-Analysis* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1972).

[8] Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pp. 78–9 and 218.

[9] A. Eckstein, 'Economic Development and Political Change in Communist Systems', *World Politics*, XXII (1970), 475–95.

economic development. Beyond a certain point, however, mobilization will yield diminishing returns. Marginal productivity rates will fall; savings and consumption will drop, perhaps by so much as to conflict with overall policy objectives (Eckstein has Chinese experience particularly in mind); and technical considerations will fail to receive the degree of attention that is necessary if productive resources are to be developed in a rational and efficient manner. The mobilization and technocratic paths to industrialization, Eckstein argues, are in fact incompatible. A certain amount of ideologically-induced resource mobilization may be a requisite for modernization; but it cannot serve as a substitute for technical and material inputs. The Stalin model (in Robert Campbell's words) is in fact a 'transitional model which has outlived its original rationale'.[10]

Tensions of a similar kind are manifest at the political level. A centralized and hierarchical system, Eckstein argues, may be quite appropriate as a model for rapid industrialization in the early stages of economic development. The social and economic transformations that follow from industrialization, however, create mounting pressure for political change, as managers, bureaucrats and specialists press for a share in the material benefits of economic advance and for a more prominent place in public life generally. The informational and decision-making loads that the system is required to sustain, moreover, rapidly outstrip its capabilities.[11] One way out of these problems is for the regimes to opt for bureaucratic decentralization; but it is 'difficult, if not impossible, to design a system of incentives for a bureaucracy that will assure spontaneous adherence of lower-level organs and micro-units to system goals'. Decentralization of a market character, on the other hand, quite apart from the social tensions it may generate, will tend to foster pressures for a further degree of decentralization and autonomy. The logic of economic growth, in fact, leads unavoidably in the direction of the modification, and ultimately the transformation, of the communist systems and their political superstructures.[12]

A number of other scholars have argued the existence and the more or less inevitable development of 'pluralist trends' in communist political systems.[13] In

[10] R. Campbell, *Soviet-type Economics* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 226; similarly J. S. Berliner, 'Economy, Polity and Social Change', in his *Economy, Society and Welfare* (New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 99–133.

[11] B. I. Sazonov has pointed out, for instance, that 10^{16} arithmetic operations are currently required each year for national economic decision-making. Industrial ministries alone send out about 1,700 orders (*prikazy*), despatch over 12,000 telegrams, and process about 300,000 documents every year (*Pravovedenie*, 1976, no. 1, pp. 72–3).

[12] Eckstein, 'Economic Development and Political Change in Communist Systems'; but see also his reservations on pp. 475 and 495.

[13] 'There has been a curious reluctance on the part of scholars', Robert Presthus has noted, 'precisely to define "pluralism"' (*Men at the Top* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 10). Our definition, which is close to that which Presthus himself advances, is as follows: the diffusion and dispersion of power in a political system from central authorities to more or less autonomous groups, organizations and individuals, typically expressed in the establishment of 'bargaining' rather than 'command' relationships between them. See further B. Harasymiw, 'Application of the Concept Pluralism to the Soviet Political System', *Newsletter on Comparative Studies of Communism*, V (1971), 40–54; J. Hough, 'The Soviet System: Petrification of Pluralism?', *Problems of Communism*, XXI (1972), 25–45; A. Korbonski, 'Comparing

directing complex industrial society and in determining its priorities of development, Merle Fainsod has pointed out, Soviet party functionaries must increasingly depend upon those who possess the professional skills that are appropriate for such a society. 'In inescapable fashion', he goes on, 'the professionalisms of military technology, industrial management, and every branch of science and engineering impinge on the capacity of the party leadership to co-ordinate them.' Each of these sections of society has a specialized interest to defend; and since these interests cannot be promoted outside the party, it follows that the party itself must become an 'arena in which these competing interests must be adjusted and reconciled'. The effects of international communist polemics, and of scientific and technical advance, tend similarly towards the dispersion of authority and influence. In sum, writes Fainsod, one may expect to see the 'emergence over time of a looser, more pragmatic, and pluralistically based party in which the differentiated interests of an industrial society find freer expression' – a party, that is, concerned with no more than the 'management of the interrelationships' of these various interests.[14]

Some writers, like Leonard Schapiro, are prepared to speak of no more than 'incipient pluralism' in this context.[15] Huntington, however, has argued that the party apparat will become the 'aggregator and regulator of competing special interests', providing for the free participation of groups and individuals in the manner of a 'modern pluralist democracy'; and it is this thesis which predominates in the literature.[16] Roy Medvedev, indeed, speaks of some kind of pluralization as an 'inevitable tendency'; Ionescu writes of pluralism – the 'broadening from inside of the Apparat and . . . the sharing of its previously exclusive power of decision' – as an 'irreversible trend'; and Karl Deutsch identifies an 'automatic trend towards

Liberalization Processes in Eastern Europe: A Preliminary Analysis', *Comparative Politics*, IV (1972), 231–49; D. Nicholls, *Three Varieties of Pluralism* (London: Macmillan, 1974); J. LaPalombara, 'Monoliths or Plural Systems: Through Conceptual Lenses Darkly', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, VIII (1975), 305–32; and (for an East European perspective) A. Kozharov, *Monizm i Plyuralizm v Ideologii i Politike* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, forthcoming). Our employment of the term 'pluralism' in the present connection should not be taken to imply support of what might be called 'pluralist orthodoxy' in the analysis of non-communist systems.

[14] M. Fainsod, 'The Dynamics of One-party Systems', in O. Garceau, ed., *Political Research and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 227–9.

[15] L. B. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, 2nd edn. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1970), p. 628. Elsewhere, however, Schapiro has argued that '"history is on the side" of pragmatic dissent, and that in the long run, even in the Soviet Union, it may succeed in effecting momentous changes' (*Political Opposition*, p. 10).

[16] *Authoritarian Politics*, pp. 40–1 and 513. See also Frederick C. Barghoorn, 'Factional, Sectional and Subversive Opposition in Soviet Politics', in R. A. Dahl, ed., *Regimes and Oppositions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 51 and 55; Johnson, *Change in Communist Systems*, p. 26; Robert G. Wesson, *The Soviet Russian State* (New York: Wiley, 1972), p. 186; P. Godwin, 'Communist Systems and Modernization', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, VI (1973), 123–4; and Jeremy Azrael, 'The Managers', in R. B. Farrell, ed., *Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (London: Butterworth, 1970), who argues that the 'future course of Soviet political development is likely to see a curtailment of the political primacy of the *apparat* and the emergence of an increasingly rigorous [*sic*] and increasingly legitimate pluralistic politics' (p. 246).

pluralization and disintegration'.[17] Gabriel Almond, in perhaps the most far-reaching of such prognostications, speaks of the 'pluralistic pressures of a modern economy and society', and of a 'secular trend in the direction of decentralization and pluralism'. A 'healthy, educated, affluent society', he argues, must inevitably demand both material, and what he calls 'spiritual consumer goods' (such as opportunities for participation and a share in the decision-making process). Already, Almond writes, 'Russian success in science, education, technology, economic productivity and national security has produced some decentralization of the political process. I fail to see how these decentralizing, pluralistic tendencies can be reversed, or how their spread can be prevented.'[18] It is to an assessment of the validity of this 'iron law of pluralism' that the remainder of this paper is devoted.

COMMUNIST PLURALISM: TESTING A HYPOTHESIS

The pluralist case has generally been based upon an account of interest-group activity in the communist polities.[19] There seems little doubt that the post-Stalin period has indeed seen an increase in the extent to which the party authorities take expert advice and opinion into account. But is this 'genuine' pluralism? In fact, as Franklyn Griffiths has pointed out, there is 'as yet little evidence to show that the organized group pursuing a coherent common interest is a frequent participant in the Soviet policy process'. Formal organizations and professions, rather, are internally fragmented and lack a common approach to most issues; and it is 'difficult to determine whether we are dealing with an aggregate, a loose coalition of like-minded actors, or the parallel unilateral articulations of virtually atomized individuals'. Nor is it easy to establish the extent to which a particular outcome has been influenced by interest-group activity. Decision-makers may operate arbitrarily, or in an 'information vacuum'; or they may accept the proposals of a given group, but for reasons that have little to do with the influence of the group in question within the political system as a whole. These problems are compounded when an attempt is made – as any test of 'pluralist trends' must do – to assess the strength of such influences over time.[20]

[17] Roy Medvedev, *Kniga o Sotsialisticheskoi Demokratii* (Amsterdam and Paris: Herzen Foundation and Grasset and Fasquelle, 1972), p. 118; Ghita Ionescu, *The Politics of the European Communist States* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), pp. 271 and 274–5; Karl W. Deutsch, 'Cracks in the Monolith: Possibilities and Patterns of Disintegration in Totalitarian Systems', in Harry Eckstein and David E. Apter, eds., *Comparative Politics: A Reader* (New York: Free Press, 1963), p. 506.

[18] G. A. Almond, *Political Development* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1970), pp. 27 and 318–19.

[19] See particularly H. G. Skilling and F. Griffiths, eds., *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), and the literature cited therein (pp. 3–45, 335–416); and R. K. Turtak, 'Interessenpluralismus in den politische Systemen Osteuropas', *Osteuropa*, XXIV (1974), 779–92.

[20] F. Griffiths, in Skilling and Griffiths, eds., *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics*, pp. 341–4. See also A. Janos, 'Group Politics in Communist Society: A Second Look at the Pluralistic Model', in Huntington and Moore, eds., *Authoritarian Politics*, pp. 437–50; and W. E. Odom, 'A Dissenting View on the Group Approach to Soviet Politics', *World Politics*, XXVIII (1976), 542–67.

Studies of the composition of the political elite and of its methods of recruitment provide no better guide. Social and career background appears to be a highly imperfect predictor of attitudes, while the link between previous attitudes and behaviour in office is even more problematic.[21] A diversification in the membership of such bodies as the Central Committee of the CPSU is therefore in itself no evidence that the hegemony of the *apparatchiki* has been eroded. An increase in the representation of the military, for instance, may reflect an increase in their influence within the political system as a whole; but it may equally reflect nothing more than a desire to honour particular individuals who were heroes of the war against Germany, of whom an increasing number have been reaching the age at which such distinctions are normally conferred. Indeed the membership of a group within leading party organs may be at its highest at a time when the influence of that group, on other evidence, is clearly in decline.[22]

A more promising approach to the measurement of communist pluralism, we shall argue, may lie in the consideration of *participation in authoritative societal decision-making*. Clearly not all claims on scarce resources need to be made in this way: decision-makers may be influenced by direct submissions as well as through representatives, and indeed pressures from outside the system altogether may play a part. Channels of influence of this kind, however, do not readily lend themselves to investigation; and in any case for our purposes we need do no more than assume that the articulation of claims in this way will co-vary – or at least not vary inversely – with the articulation of claims within the formal structures of party and state. With Robert Presthùs, then, we have taken participation in authoritative decision-making to be an '*indicator* of pluralism . . . an instrument by which pluralism in a community may be measured, however roughly'.[23] If a hypothetical group is to make its influence felt upon a societal outcome or is to make an effective claim upon the distribution of resources, we shall postulate, it or its spokesmen must be represented in, and must intervene in the deliberations of, the institutions within which such competing claims are ultimately aggregated and arbitrated.[24] Those institutions, in the

[21] L. J. Edinger and D. D. Searing, 'Social Background in Elite Analysis: A Methodological Inquiry', *American Political Science Review*, LXI (1967), 428–45; W. A. Welsh, 'The Comparative Study of Political Leadership in Communist Systems', in Carl Beck *et al.*, eds., *Comparative Communist Political Leadership* (New York: McKay, 1973), pp. 9 and 35. Milton Lodge does no service to scholarly inquiry by assuming a 'positive correlation between articulated attitudes and political behaviour' in his *Soviet Elite Attitudes since Stalin* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1969), fn. 2 on p.2.

[22] R. H. Donaldson, 'The 1971 Central Committee: An Assessment of the New Elite', *World Politics*, XXIV (1971–72), 382–409, p. 399; J. Hough, 'The Soviet Elite: I', *Problems of Communism*, XVI (January–February 1967), 28–35, p. 29; R. Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 330–1.

[23] *Men at the Top*, p. 12.

[24] It should be noted that the representation of the group or individuals concerned need not necessarily be direct. In the British Parliament in the 1830s and 1840s, as Almond and Powell note, the interests of working people, who were not themselves directly represented in that assembly, were articulated by 'certain aristocratic and middle-class members of Parliament' (Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics: A Development Approach* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1966), p. 84).

Soviet context, are clearly the national legislature – the Supreme Soviet of the USSR – and, perhaps more important, the Central Committee of the CPSU. Their role in the policy-making process will be considered more fully below. Typically, we shall posit, the '*iron law of pluralism*' *will be confirmed if the articulation and aggregation of claims within institutions of this kind appears to be increasing. The pluralist thesis will be disconfirmed, however, if practices of this kind are not increasing or are decreasing in frequency.*

The national legislature – the USSR Supreme Soviet – is clearly at least *prima facie* a body within which such a reconciliation of competing claims might be expected to take place, and in which bargaining, 'pluralist', norms might be expected to evolve. The 'highest organ of state power in the USSR', according to Article 106 of the Constitution, the Supreme Soviet has been less than an influential political institution for most of its thirty-eight years of existence. Since Stalin, however, and more especially since Khrushchev, the Supreme Soviet has made a 'modest – but in terms of its past history, impressive – comeback as an institution with more than purely symbolic functions'.[25] Pluralists are widely agreed, moreover, that this is a development that will, and indeed must, continue in the future. 'For several reasons', writes Gripp, 'constitutional authority, the ideological myth structure, growing citizen awareness as translated into greater articulation of demands, and the practical necessities of governing complex societies – we can anticipate increased legislative vigour and a growing independence of legislators within communist political systems in the future'. As imposition decreases, notes Blondel, the 'real influence of the legislature will increase'. Indeed a movement towards a parliamentary regime, or true liberalization, in Tatu's view, 'cannot fail to occur', corresponding as it does to the 'overall evolution of Soviet society'.[26] The legislature is generally agreed to be more active, moreover, in the more 'pluralist' East European states, such as Yugoslavia, and an increased degree of activity has generally accompanied moves in that direction, as in Czechoslovakia during 1968 and in Poland and Hungary somewhat earlier.[27] We

[25] Jerome M. Gilison, *British and Soviet Politics: Legitimacy and Convergence* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), p. 50. See also D. Richard Little, 'Legislative Authority in the Soviet Political System', *Slavic Review*, XXX (1971), 57–73, and the same author's 'Soviet Parliamentary Committees after Khrushchev', *Soviet Studies*, XXIV (1972), 41–60; and S. Minagawa, 'The Functions of the Supreme Soviet Organs and Problems of their Institutional Development', *Soviet Studies*, XVII (1975), 46–70.

[26] Richard C. Gripp, *The Political System of Communism* (London: Nelson, 1973), p. 140; Jean Blondel, *Comparative Legislatures* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 52; Michel Tatu, *Power in the Kremlin* (London: Collins, 1969), p. 538. See also more generally A. Kornberg and S. H. Hines, 'Legislatures and the Modernization of Societies', *Comparative Political Studies*, V (1973), 471–92.

[27] Galia Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 64–6 and 182; H. G. Skilling, *The Governments of Communist East Europe* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1966), pp. 117–18; W. Leonhard, *The Kremlin since Stalin* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 203; Alex Pravda, *Reform and Change in the Czechoslovak Political System: January–August 1968*, Research Paper 90–020 (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1975), pp. 42–4. See also J. Wiatr, 'Elements of Pluralism in the Polish Political System', *Polish Sociological Bulletin*, XIII (1966), 19–26; A. H. Brown, 'Pluralistic Trends in Czechoslovakia', *Soviet Studies*, XVII (1966), 53–72; David W. Paul, 'The Repluralization of Czechoslovak Politics in the 1960s', *Slavic Review*, XXXIII (1974), 721–40;

shall accordingly take an *increased degree of interest articulation and aggregation within the national legislature* as our first test of the pluralist thesis.

By itself, however, this is an insufficient test, given that legislatures in the communist states have generally been less central to the 'authoritative allocation of values' than their respective communist parties. Indeed, as Robert Tucker has noted, it may make more sense to regard the party Central Committee, rather than the national legislature, as the equivalent to the parliament of a liberal-democratic system.[28] Here again, however, there appears to be widespread agreement that the CPSU Central Committee has become an increasingly influential policy-forming and decision-making institution since the death of Stalin, and that it must become more so in the future. The Central Committee now meets more frequently, and its style of working is collegial. It serves, in Hammer's words, as a 'forum within which the top leaders seek advice, information and support'; its semi-annual plenary sessions provide a 'sounding board for new departures in policy', and occasions on which the top party leadership can 'talk informally with the regional party leaders'. Its members exert an important influence upon decisions; they may even, in exceptional circumstances, be called upon to arbitrate differences within the top party leadership itself.[29]

Pluralists are agreed, moreover, that the Central Committee's more influential role is the 'inevitable result [in Lewin's words] of the deep structural transformation of the whole social setting' rather than of temporary or short-run factors. The enlargement or broadening of the apex of power, he writes, is the essential characteristic of these changes; a greater number of groups have been brought within the decision-making process, and the party has become 'more than ever a bargaining-and-brokerage type of organization'. The Central Committee, in particular, has gained in authority, and its 'capacity to serve as a mediator or as a kind of supreme umpire' has been enhanced.[30] Daniels, indeed, describes the removal of Khrushchev in October 1964 as a 'fundamental watershed in the history of Soviet politics': the 'first time in the entire history of Russia since Riurik that the established leader of the country was removed by the rules of representative procedure'. By making the succession to the leadership depend upon the confidence of the Central Committee, he writes, Soviet political practice has taken a 'long step towards a sort of miniature parliamentary system at the top of the great bureaucratic pyramid of the Party', a practice that is

Charles Gati, ed., *The Politics of Modernization in Eastern Europe* (New York and London: Praeger, 1974); D. C. Pirages, *Modernization and Political-tension Management: A Socialist Society in Perspective* (New York and London: Praeger, 1972); Trond Gilberg, *Modernization in Romania since World War II* (New York and London: Praeger, 1975); R. P. Farkas, *Yugoslav Economic Development and Political Change* (New York and London: Praeger, 1975); and P. Jambreck, *Development and Social Change in Yugoslavia* (Farnborough, Hants.: Saxon House, 1975).

[28] Robert C. Tucker, 'On the Comparative Study of Communism', *World Politics*, XIX (1967), p. 251.

[29] Darrell P. Hammer, *USSR: the Politics of Oligarchy* (Hinsdale, Ohio: Dryden Press, 1974), pp. 191–2.

[30] Moshe Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates* (London: Pluto Press, 1975), pp. 264–7 (he adds that the future pattern of Soviet politics nevertheless remains 'far from clear' (p. 269)).

likely to extend further as each participant in the 'parliamentarianism of the Central Committee' seeks support from his own 'constituents' in order to enhance his position within it. It is clearly implied that the extension of these processes, corresponding as they do to deep-seated and still continuing changes in economy and society, will be a probable and perhaps inevitable development.[31]

The Central Committee, then, is most obviously the institution within which societal interests are aggregated, major policy options (in however Aesopian a form) submitted for consideration and competing claims arbitrated. It is also agreed by pluralists that the diffusion of power within the party in general, and within and to the Central Committee in particular, is a necessary consequence of the processes they have identified. *An increased degree of interest articulation and aggregation within the Central Committee of the CPSU*, accordingly, will be our second test of the 'iron law of pluralism'.

COMMUNIST PLURALISM: OPERATIONALIZING A HYPOTHESIS

In order to test the pluralist thesis on the basis outlined above, the stenographic records of the USSR Supreme Soviet and the CPSU Central Committee were examined for the period 1954–75. These are the post-Stalin years, a period in which major social and economic changes have taken place in the USSR and in which – or so, at least, it has been argued – there has been a parallel and not less notable development of 'pluralist trends'.[32] The period divides in turn into two equal parts, the Khrushchev years (up to October 1964) and the Brezhnev years (from 1965 to date). If the pluralist thesis is to be confirmed, we have posited, both the Supreme Soviet and the Central Committee – certainly the latter – should manifest an increasing degree of activity over this period. There should be generally higher levels of activity during the 'Brezhnev years', moreover, than during the 'Khrushchev years' that preceded them. Is this in fact the case?

The records of the proceedings of the national legislature, the USSR Supreme Soviet, are available for the whole of the period under consideration.[33] The results

[31] Robert V. Daniels, 'Soviet Politics since Khrushchev', in John W. Strong, ed., *The Soviet Union under Brezhnev and Kosygin* (New York and London: Van Nostrand-Reinhold, 1971), pp. 22–3.

[32] See Lodge, *Soviet Elite Attitudes since Stalin*, for perhaps the fullest statement of this view.

[33] *Zasedaniya Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR Chetvertogo Sozyva. Pervaya Sessiya (20–27 Aprelya 1954g.). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1954) – *Devyataya Sessiya (19–21 Dekabrya 1957). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1958); *Zasedaniya Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR Pyatogo Sozyva. Pervaya Sessiya (27–31 Marta 1958). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1958) – *Sed'maya Sessiya (6–8 Dekabrya 1961). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1962); *Zasedaniya Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR Shestogo Sozyva. Pervaya Sessiya (23–25 Aprelya 1962). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1962) – *Sed'maya Sessiya (7–9 Dekabrya 1965). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1966); *Zasedaniya Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR Sed'mogo Sozyva. Pervaya Sessiya (2–3 Avgusta 1966). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1966) – *Sed'maya*

of our investigation are set out in Table 1. In order to assess the extent to which pluralist trends were in evidence over this period we measured the number of days of the year on which meetings were held (Article 110 of the Constitution requires that sessions be convened twice yearly, but does not specify for how many days on each occasion). This is our first variable. The number of times on which a legislature meets, Blondel has noted, places a direct constraint upon its ability to control the executive branch of government, and 'is, therefore, an indicator of its influence in general matters'.[34] The number of speeches per annum is our second variable. It may similarly be expected to reflect the general influence of the legislature, and in particular the opportunity for an individual deputy to articulate a claim upon resources. His ability to do so, however, will clearly be diminished to the extent to which official spokesmen – ministers and the like – can monopolize legislative time; and this general category has accordingly been disaggregated into 'official pronouncements' (*doklady*, *soobshcheniya*, *zaklyuchitel'nye slova* and other governmental statements) and 'speeches' (*rech'i*, *vystupleniya* and other interventions by deputies without a formal state position). Our third variable is volume of legislation (*zakony*) per annum. Finally, the total number of deputies has been included for each year: this shows a modest rise over the period, reflecting both an increase in the population and changes in the norms of representation.

Analogous data for the party are somewhat more difficult to obtain. Stenographic records of Central Committee meetings were published for only a limited number of years during the period we are considering, and not for every meeting during those years (1958–65).[35] Alternative sources of data, however, are provided by the standard

Sessiya (16–19 Dekabrya 1969). Stenograficheskii Otchet (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1970); *Zasedaniya Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR Vos'mogo Sozyva. Pervaya Sessiya (14–15 Iyulya 1970). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1970) – *Sed'maya Sessiya (12–14 Dekabrya 1973). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel' stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1974); *Zasedaniya Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR Devyatogo Sozyva. Pervaya Sessiya (25–26 Iyulya 1974). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1974) – *Chetvertaya Sessiya (21–24 Dekabrya 1975). Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, 1976).

[34] Blondel, *Comparative Legislatures*, p. 124.

[35] *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 15–19 Dekabrya 1958g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Gos. Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1958); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 24–29 Iyunya 1959g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Gos. Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1959); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 22–25 Dekabrya 1959g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Gos. Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1960); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 13–16 Iyulya 1960g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Gos. Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1960); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 10–18 Yanvarya 1961g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Gos. Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1961); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 5–9 Marta 1962g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Gos. Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1962); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 19–23 Noyabrya 1962g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Gos. Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1963); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 18–21 Iyunya 1963g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1964); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 9–13 Dekabrya 1963g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1964); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 10–15 Fevralya 1964g. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1964); *Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS 24–26 Marta 1965. Stenograficheskii Otchet* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1965).

TABLE 1 *Measuring Communist Pluralism: the USSR Supreme Soviet 1954–75*

						Index numbers (annual means 1954–75 = 100)*						
	Days p.a.	Speeches p.a.	Of which official	Laws p.a.	No. of deputies	Days p.a.	Speeches p.a.	Of which official	Laws p.a.	Days p.a. per deputy	Speeches p.a. per deputy	Laws p.a. per deputy
1954	8	87	16	6	1,347	127	86	95	43	136	92	46
1955	13	166	32	13	1,347	206	164	99	94	221	176	100
1956	6	75	18	12	1,347	95	74	124	87	102	97	93
1957	16	236	57	26	1,347	253	233	125	188	272	250	202
1958	8	153	21	24	1,378	127	151	71	173	133	158	182
1959	5	109	20	12	1,378	79	107	95	87	83	113	91
1960	9	156	27	22	1,378	142	154	89	189	150	161	167
1961	3	73	13	13	1,378	47	72	92	94	50	76	98
1962	7	109	19	14	1,443	111	107	90	101	111	108	101
1963	4	89	13	8	1,443	63	88	75	58	64	88	58
1964	6	146	23	11	1,443	95	144	81	79	95	145	80
1965	5	113	15	18	1,443	79	111	68	129	79	112	130
1966	6	77	21	18	1,517	95	76	141	129	91	72	124
1967	3	50	12	15	1,517	47	49	124	108	45	47	103
1968	7	88	22	19	1,517	111	87	129	137	106	83	131
1969	5	90	17	15	1,517	79	89	97	108	76	85	103
1970	5	82	21	17	1,517	79	81	132	122	76	77	117
1971	3	49	9	8	1,517	47	48	95	57	45	46	55
1972	4	75	15	7	1,517	63	74	103	59	60	70	48
1973	6	100	19	11	1,517	95	99	98	79	91	94	76
1974	5	49	13	9	1,517	79	48	137	64	76	46	62
1975	5	61	8	7	1,517	79	60	68	50	76	57	48

* Index numbers, and changes over the period 1954–75, are based on the following annual means:

	Days p.a.	Speeches p.a.	Of which official	Laws p.a.	Days p.a. per deputy	Speeches p.a. per deputy	Laws p.a. per deputy
1954–75	6·32	101·50	19·30%	13·86	0·0044	0·0701	0·0096
1954–64	7·73	127·18	18·51%	14·64	0·0056	0·0919	0·0106
1965–75	4·91	75·82	20·62%	13·09	0·0032	0·0502	0·0087
1954–64 as % of 1965–75	157·41	167·74	89·77	111·84	171·71	182·98	121·97

Sources: As in fn. 33; and *Verkhovnyi Sovet SSSR Devyatogo Sozyva. Statisticheskii Sbornik* (Moscow: Izvestiya, 1974).

TABLE 2 *Measuring Communist Pluralism: the Central Committee of the CPSU 1954–75*

						Index numbers (annual means 1954–75 = 100)*						
	Days p.a.	Speeches p.a.	Of which official	Decisions p.a.	No. of members	Days p.a.	Speeches p.a.	Of which official	Decisions p.a.	Days p.a. per member	Speeches p.a. per member	Decisions p.a. per member
1954	9	—	—	2	236	127	—	—	54	175	—	75
1955	16	—	—	5	236	226	—	—	136	313	—	188
1956	6	—	3	2	255	85	—	—	54	109	—	70
1957	13	—	2	3	255	183	—	—	81	235	—	105
1958	13	72	6	7	255	183	147	57	190	235	199	244
1959	10	105	14	2	255	141	214	91	54	181	289	70
1960	5	33	8	2	255	71	67	166	54	90	91	70
1961	11	61	17	8	330	155	124	191	217	154	130	215
1962	11	105	3	2	330	155	214	20	54	154	224	54
1963	9	75	3	4	330	127	153	27	109	126	160	108
1964	8	58	20	3	330	113	118	236	81	112	124	81
1965	7	74	7	5	330	97	150	65	136	98	158	135
1966	9	15	6	5	360	127	31	274	136	115	29	123
1967	3	36	5	4	360	42	73	95	109	38	70	99
1968	6	73	8	5	360	85	149	75	136	77	143	123
1969	2	20	4	3	360	28	41	137	81	26	39	74
1970	4	31	6	4	360	56	63	133	109	51	61	99
1971	4	25	5	4	396	56	51	37	109	47	44	90
1972	2	26	4	3	396	28	53	105	81	23	46	67
1973	4	46	4	2	396	56	94	60	54	47	82	45
1974	2	17	4	2	396	28	35	161	54	23	30	45
1975	2	12	5	4	396	28	26	285	109	23	21	90

* Index numbers and changes over the period 1954–75, are based on the following annual means:

	Days p.a.	Speeches p.a.	Of which official	Decisions p.a.	Days p.a. per member	Speeches p.a. per member	Decisions p.a. per member
1954–75	7·09	49·11[b]	14·59%[b]	3·68	0·0217	0·1422[b]	0·0113
1954–64	10·09	72·71[a]	13·95%[a]	3·64	0·03619	0·2441[a]	0·0130
1965–75	4·09	34·109	15·47%	3·72	0·0109	0·0908	0·0099
1954–64 as % of 1965–75	246·69	213·28[c]	90·17[c]	97·85	332·14	268·87[c]	131·37

[a]1958–64; [b]1958–75; [c]1958–64 as percentage of 1965–75.

Sources: As in fns 35 and 36; and *Pravda*, 2 December 1975.

collection of party resolutions and documents, a new and corrected edition of which has recently appeared, and by the *Party Worker's Handbook*, an annual collection of a broadly similar character which both corroborates and supplements the other collection.[36] These sources generally provide, besides the texts of the resolutions to which the Central Committee gave its assent, a list of those who delivered reports and of those who took part in discussion. A number of minor inconsistencies emerge, but not on matters of substance; and further checks are possible against the standard Western authorities.[37] Information relating to pluralist trends within the party, then, is somewhat less abundant than that relating to the institutions of state; but it is, on the whole, sufficient for our purposes. We have again selected the number of days per annum on which meetings were held as our first variable;[38] the number and source of contributions to discussion is again our second variable (data, unfortunately, are not available for all the years concerned); and recorded decisional output (*postanovleniya*) is our third variable. The number of members of the Central Committee in each year, both full members and candidates (who have speaking but not voting rights), has again been placed in the final column.[39]

A test of pluralism of this kind might appear unduly 'institutional' in respect of a Western-type system. In the communist context, however, where power is more highly centralized and the institutions of party and state come much closer to monopolizing the legitimate formulation of policy, it has rather greater claims to defensibility. We do not in any case necessarily wish to imply that all, or even most, of the task of arbitrating competing societal interests is undertaken by the Supreme Soviet and the Central Committee at the plenary sessions we have examined. All that

[36] *KPSS v Rezolyutsiakh i Resheniakh S''ezdov, Konferentsii i Plenumov Ts.K.*, 8th edn. (10 vols., Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1970–73); *Spravochnik Partiinogo Rabotnika*, vyp. 1–15 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1957–75). The *Ezhegodnik* of the *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* may also be consulted (Moscow: Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1957ff).

[37] These accounts include Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*; Tatu, *Power in the Kremlin*; Leonhard, *The Kremlin since Stalin*; and R. Conquest, *Power and Policy in the USSR* (London: Macmillan, 1961). The possibility exists that resolutions may have been adopted by the Central Committee which have remained secret. These, however, are probably 'not very numerous', in the view of the editor of the English edition of the standard collection of party documents (R. H. McNeal, in *Resolutions and Decisions of the CPSU*, vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. ix), and for our purposes they may safely be ignored.

[38] As Fainsod has noted, the increased number of Central Committee meetings since Stalin is 'one index of its enhanced importance' (*How Russia is Ruled*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 219).

[39] It would ideally have been desirable to have included a further set of indicators relating to the content (as distinct from those other indicators selected) of members' and deputies' contributions to debate. It would have been possible to do so for the Central Committee, however, only in respect of those meetings for which stenographic records were published; and a further series of difficulties would have arisen in attempting to distinguish for coding purposes between genuine claims upon the allocation of scarce resources, and those – undoubtedly a large, but variable, majority – which were based upon the prior approval or even proposal of the party–state authorities. It seemed safest in the circumstances to concentrate upon those variables which were more susceptible of unambiguous measurement, but which nevertheless appeared to provide a sufficient basis for testing for the longer-term systemic changes with which the pluralists are essentially concerned.

need be assumed is that the articulation and aggregation of claims within the political system as a whole will co-vary – or at least not vary inversely – with the indicators of such activity that have been chosen for consideration in this paper. There is a good deal of warrant for an approach of this kind in the literature, which finds (for instance) 'access' to be a highly productive discriminator between types of political systems and to be highly correlated with factors such as 'aggregation by the legislature' and 'articulation by parties';[40] and whatever its defects as a means of examining 'pluralism' more generally, it does appear to provide a basis upon which the thesis with which we are presently concerned may legitimately be assessed. What then do our results suggest?

COMMUNIST PLURALISM REASSESSED

It is at once clear that our data give little or no support to the pluralist hypothesis. Not simply do the post-Stalin years fail to show the general increase in interest articulation at the apex of party and state that the pluralists predicted; they show, on the contrary, that the nearer one comes to the present day the greater the tendency for pluralism, on almost all the indicators we have chosen, to decline. The point is perhaps most immediately apparent when we compare the average levels of the Khrushchev period (up to 1964) with those of the period that has followed it (Tables 1 and 2, 1954–64 as a percentage of 1965–75). Frequency of meetings, interventions in debate, volume of legislation – all show a decline in the more recent period. The only indicator to register an increase, significantly, is that which records the proportion of speeches in the Supreme Soviet and the Central Committee that were delivered in an official capacity. These results scarcely bear out the pluralist hypothesis.

Looking more particularly at the USSR Supreme Soviet over the period concerned (Table 1), it is clear, first of all, that sessions have become notably less frequent. During the period up to 1964, for instance, the number of days of meeting per annum exceeded the average for the period as a whole in six of the eleven years involved. For the Brezhnev period, however, this position is more or less reversed; in only one of these years, in fact, did the frequency of meetings exceed the average for the period as a whole. The disparities are even more marked when we come to consider the number of speeches delivered in each of the two periods involved. Only in legislative output, in fact, do the post-Khrushchev years begin to approach those that preceded them, while the only respect in which they surpass them is, as we have noted, in the proportion of speeches by official or ministerial spokesmen.

We must bear in mind, however, that the size of the Supreme Soviet has shown a tendency to increase over the period under consideration, from 1,347 members in 1954 to 1,517 in 1975; and some allowance must clearly be made for a change of this kind, operating, as it evidently must, against the opportunities for individual deputies to articulate claims, criticize official spokesmen and generally to influence the formation of public policy. We have accordingly related the number of days of meeting,

[40] Philip M. Gregg and Arthur S. Banks, 'Dimensions of Political Systems: Factor Analysis of a Cross-Polity Survey', *American Political Science Review*, LIX (1965), 602–14.

speeches and laws per annum to the number of deputies in each year in the final three columns of Table 1, expressing the result for each year in terms of the average for the period as a whole. As one might expect, the disparities become greater. In only one of the Brezhnev years, for instance, does the number of speeches per deputy per annum reach the average for the period as a whole, and in only one of the same years does the number of days of meetings per deputy per annum approach the overall average (in two of these years, indeed, it drops to less than half of that level). The annual output of legislation per deputy is more stable; but overall these are scarcely findings that can be reconciled with the 'iron law of pluralism'.

Our data in respect of the Central Committee are somewhat less satisfactory. The findings set out above, however (Table 2), clearly reinforce and even strengthen the general conclusion that we reached in respect of interest articulation and aggregation within the USSR Supreme Soviet. The figures relating to the number of days of meeting per annum, for instance, show that in only two of the eleven years up to 1964 did the frequency of Central Committee plenary meetings drop below the average for the period as a whole. During the Brezhnev years that followed, however, in only one year (1966) was that level exceeded. The Central Committee's decisional output, again, was relatively more stable; but such data as are available for interventions in discussion run closely parallel to those relating to the frequency of meetings. In only one of the Khrushchev years (1960), for instance, did the number of speeches fall below the average for the period as a whole, while in only two of the years after 1965 was that level surpassed. The number of speeches made in an official capacity, moreover, occupied a greater proportion of the total before 1964 than after that date.

Again, however, we must remember that the Central Committee, like the Supreme Soviet, has been increasing in size over the period under consideration, from 236 full and candidate members in 1954 to 396 in 1975. Relating these figures to those for frequency of meetings, frequency of speeches and decisional output, the disparities between the earlier and later periods become even more marked. Substantially more decisions were taken per member per annum before 1964, for instance, than were taken after that date. The figures for days of meeting per member per annum and for number of speeches per member per annum are even more striking: the levels recorded under these headings before 1964, in fact, are two and a half or even three times greater than those recorded in the later period. Again, these are results which scarcely seem consistent with the pluralist hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have attempted, on the basis of such evidence as exists and lends itself to an analysis of this kind, to assess the validity of the thesis that we have termed the 'iron law of pluralism'. That thesis, in our submission, cannot be sustained. Meetings of high-level interest-aggregating institutions, so far from increasing in number, have become less frequent; the number of those who have been able to articulate claims within them has steadily diminished; and their legislative or decisional output has also fallen, although not to so great an extent. When the increasing

membership of these bodies is considered in conjunction with these figures the decline is even more apparent. Pluralism, it appears, so far from increasing in accordance with a putative 'iron law' to this effect, has become a steadily less salient feature of the Soviet polity.

This in turn suggests another conclusion of a somewhat more general kind. For the pluralist thesis, like the convergence theory to which it is so closely related, is in fact another example of the ethnocentrism that so often pervades Western analysis of the communist states and their political systems. The pluralists have simply assumed that the systems they study, lacking the electoral and other 'feedback' mechanisms that the political structures of a modern liberal-democratic state provide, will find their present patterns of development impossible to sustain indefinitely, and will be forced in the end to turn to the institutions of societal regulation that are presently to be found in the economically more developed parts of the non-communist world.[41] Our findings suggest that this need not necessarily be the case. Indeed, as the pluralist thesis comes under increasingly heavy attack in the Western systems in respect of which it was first devised, it becomes apparent that a reconsideration of its extension to the political systems of other lands may be overdue. Such an investigation might well conclude that communist systems are rather more flexible and adaptive than political scientists have hitherto been willing to recognize, and that the association between a high level of socio-economic development and pluralist politics elsewhere is an historically specific, limited and perhaps unrepeatable phenomenon. A variety of political forms, in fact, may be compatible with advanced industrialism.

[41] See, for an extended statement of this thesis, Z. Gitelman, 'Beyond Leninism: Political Development in Eastern Europe', *Newsletter on Comparative Studies of Communism*, V (1972), 18–43; Gilison, *British and Soviet Politics*, p. 176; R. Lowenthal, 'On "Established" Communist Party Regimes', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, VII (1974), 335–58; and, for what is perhaps the *locus classicus* on this theme, T. Parsons, 'Evolutionary Universals in Society', *American Sociological Review*, XXIX (1964), 338–57.